

Poverty Guidelines and Determining Eligibility for Participation in Head Start Programs

The HHS Poverty Guidelines and Section 645 of the Head Start Act are used to determine income eligibility for participation in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Program staff may refer to these resources when working with families.

Children from birth to age five are from families with incomes below the poverty guidelines are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services. Children from homeless families, families receiving public assistance such as TANF or SSI are also eligible. Foster children are eligible regardless of their foster family's income. Program staff members may refer to this section of the Head Start Act to further understand eligibility for Head Start and Early Head Start. [Section 645 of the Head Start Act.](#)

The poverty guidelines are adjusted for families of different sizes and may be used to determine financial eligibility for certain federal programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start services. The guidelines are issued each year in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services. A single set of guidelines applies to the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia. There are separate sets of poverty guidelines for Alaska and Hawaii. These guidelines may be used when determining a family's eligibility for Head Start and Early Head Start services

2015 Poverty Guidelines

Persons in family/household	Poverty Guideline
1	\$11,770
2	\$15,930
3	\$20,090
4	\$24,250
5	\$28,410
6	\$32,570
7	\$36,730
8	\$40,890
For families/households with more than eight persons, add \$4,160 for each additional person.	